

THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE.

A Letter from Mr. Anthony Comstock in Reply to his Critics.

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE, 150 NASSAU ST. DEC. 1, 1887.

To the Editor of the Bloomfield Citizen:

An eminent gentleman, a resident of your town, has kindly brought me a copy of your paper of Nov. 26th, containing an editorial entitled "Anthony Comstock." Very naturally you have taken your cue and argument from the tone and expression of the Daily Press. The Daily Press in the main, have based their attacks of ridicule, misrepresentation and abuse upon gross misstatements published in what has been justly termed, a "mystery evening paper."

One of the evening papers published a lot of pictures, and claimed that these pictures were the ones that were the subject of complaint in the courts, upon which certain gentlemen had been arrested. It will be sufficient to state that not one of the pictures thus represented are the exhibits upon which the warrant and complaint were based.

Not stopping to discuss whether all of the works of some of the unsavory authors you name in your paper are proper for the youth of this country to read; not disputing that some of the works of these authors are sold by reputable firms under the restriction of a high price to students only, or literary gentlemen to make up their libraries, I simply ask the attention of yourself and readers to a few plain facts in the matter, and then let those who have children in your town say whether or no I am a "crank," or whether I have meddled in that which does not concern me, and concern more than all—every child in the land.

The gentleman who wrote the editorial in your paper may be an exceedingly learned man, but there is one thing he seems to have entirely omitted. He says: "When Mr. Comstock first began he accomplished much good by suppressing vulgar and nasty products of the pen and pencil which were sold and bought merely because they were nasty." This was well and with the suppression of this sort of stuff the object of the statute is attained.

There is a higher authority on the "object of the statute" of this State than the author of that editorial; and I quote from the celebrated case of "People vs. August Mueller," in the words of the General Term of the Supreme Court, who affirmed the judgment of conviction in that case. Mueller had been tried and convicted in the Oyer & Terminer Court, of New York City, for selling obscene pictures. Eight of these pictures were conceded to have been photographs of works of art exhibited in the Salon of Paris, and one of them was proved to have been exhibited in the Centennial at Philadelphia. The Court says:

"The object of the law was to protect public morals especially of that class of the community whose character is not so completely formed as to be proof against the lewd effects of the pictures, photographs and publications prohibited."

As some of these pictures which you seem to defend in your editorial were duplicates of some of the pictures that Mueller was convicted for selling in 1884, it will be interesting at least to your readers to know what the opinion of the General Term of the Supreme Court was in reference to those pictures. Having had the pictures before them, they say:

"They are photographs of nude females in a variety of attitudes, and of figures, the jury might very well, and naturally would determine, to be both indecent and obscene in their character—ordinarily they would be so pronounced, although they would not exert the same demoralizing and sensual effects upon all persons alike. Their judgment would be the same that the photographs and pictures would tend to promote vicious and sensual conduct, and prove injurious to the morals of the community, especially to those whose judgment and experience were not sufficient to control the impulses of their passion."

It will thus be seen that notwithstanding your interpretation of the law, that the Supreme Court of this State by a unanimous decision differs from you. This case was carried to the Court of Appeals, and the Court of Appeals, by a unanimous decision, says: "We find no error in the record."

That your readers may clearly comprehend the fact that because these photographs are photographs of works of art they may be also obscene, lewd and indecent, within the statute, I desire to quote a word from the Court of Appeals, (reported in the 96 N. Y. Reports, page 411).

"The facts that the original pictures of which the photographs were copies had been exhibited in the Salon of Paris was admitted by the Prosecution, and it was proved that one of them had been publicly exhibited in Philadelphia. But this did not as a matter of law, exclude a finding by the jury that the photographs were obscene and indecent. It is not impossible that the public exhibition of indecent pictures may have been permitted in Paris or Philadelphia, but the fact that a picture had been publicly exhibited would not necessarily determine its character as decent or indecent."

If you will go back to 1726, to the case of King vs. Curl, tried under the Common Law in England, you will find the principle that "The Courts are the guardians of the public morals," and "That which tends to corrupt public morals is indictable," clearly laid down. If you will follow the cases from that date down to the present time, you will find that all the courts in England and America have announced and approved of this principle. The test of obscenity has been clearly laid down in the English Courts. That test has been approved of in every case tried since in the courts of this country, and is as follows:

"Whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt the minds of persons open to such immoral influences into whose hands a publication of this sort may come."

It will thus be seen, that you in common with the Press generally, fail to recognize the all-important question of public morals; fail to distinguish between a work of art and a photograph which strips a painting of all that makes it a work of art, you fail to discern the effect of this libel on art when placed in the open market at a low figure, thus bringing it within easy reach of the young of this country.

In the case in which you are so free with your criticism, it will be interesting to you to know that some fifteen or twenty persons have been convicted for the sale of similar pictures; and the parties recently arrested not only were warned,

but knew of the conviction of some of these men. They also had a copy of the law served upon them, but still they continued to sell and import these pictures. You forget another thing—that this is a question of the proper enforcement of the law, and that the rich man has no more privileges under the law than the poor man. If there is anything more abhorrent than to try, condemn and pass judgment upon another without a knowledge of the facts, it is to set up a standard of justice which only punishes the poor, and allows a man in a more favored position to go unwhipped of justice.

Another thing I beg to emphasize in your midst is that there is not a boy or girl in the town of Bloomfield whose moral purity and character is not of more importance to the community than all of the photographs that have ever been imported from France, and all of French Art of the character that we are fighting against.

I cannot but admire your candor and frankness, and I hope you will extend it to me, at least, by granting me space for this defence even though I have been condemned and sentenced by the Press generally as a "crank" and "without judgment."

Very Respectfully,
ANTHONY COMSTOCK,
Secy.

To the Musical Public of Bloomfield.
Editor Bloomfield Citizen:

For the last time we would call attention to the fact that the evening of the Grand Classical Concert given by the students singing society "Polyhymnia" is near at hand. On Tuesday, December 6th, this great musical event of the season will take place. Having full confidence in the ability of the public of Bloomfield to duly appreciate good music, we feel assured that the undertaking will meet with general approval and will also be crowned with financial success, enabling the students to present to the seminary their Christmas gift in the form of a handsome organ. The students rely upon the cheerful support which has been granted them so freely on former occasions by their many kind friends. All will readily see that the possession of an organ will be a great benefit to the seminary in general, helping the students in a proper rendition of the difficult German chorals, and thereby contributing greatly towards heightening the edifying influence of their morning and evening prayers. May all who are convinced of the necessity of bringing the great masses of Germans who come to this land under the influence of the Gospel of Christ, show a kind heart and lend a helping hand to this company of thirty-two students, who are devoting their lives to this great and holy though very difficult calling. Before inserting the full programme, we would now express our heartfelt thanks to the Misses A. Colfax and M. Davis, alto's, and Mrs. P. J. Camp soprano, for their great kindness in volunteering to act as their highly esteemed services. We are willing to let the programme stand on its own merits, and would therefore publish it now in the columns of this valuable paper. It is as follows:

PART I.

1. Orchestra: (a) Reve Apre's, Le Bal, (Ed. Bonaldi.) (d) Heros-d'el Caprice, (Wih. Popp.) European Society.
2. Soprano Solo: Waiting, (Millard.) Miss M. Boucsein, New York.
3. Cither Club: Frankfurter Cither Quartet-March; Amicitia Cither Club, New York.
4. Octette: Bill of Fare, (Zoellner.) "Polyhymnia."
5. Piano Solo: Cachucha Caprice, (J. Raff.) Prof. W. C. Pederit.
6. Quartet: The Dreamy See, (V. Mohring.) Miss M. Boucsein, Miss E. Oerter, Mr. O. Klose, Mr. Albert Bruchlos.
7. Flute Solo: Rapsodie Americaine, (Terschak.) Mr. D. Wilkinson, Newark.

PART II.

1. Cither Club: Selection; Amicitia Cither Club, New York.
2. Alto Solo: Where the Lindeus Bloom, (Dudley Buck.) Miss E. Oerter, New York.
3. Grand Chorus: Te Deum Laudamus; (Richard Wagner.) Choir of the German Presbyterian Church of Rahway, N. J., and the "Polyhymnia."
4. Violin Solo: Concerto Primo, (De Beriot.) Master P. W. Geyer, N. Y.
5. Orchestra: Selection; Ruddygore.
6. Flute Solo: Columbus, (Terschak.) Mr. D. Wilkinson.
7. Octette: Arion Waltz, (Vogel.) "Polyhymnia."

Phoenix Hose Company's Entertainment.

A large audience gathered in Library Hall Thursday evening to hear the Georgia Jubilee Singers. From the first to the last vigorous applause followed every performance. The singing was pronounced excellent. Mr. Blackwell, the funny man, made friends with the autocratic galleryites, who evinced a disposition to exact more than that gentleman was willing to give for a quarter. In the role of Mr. Piper he was called out four times. A burlesque called "Uncle Tom's Cabin Played in Five Minutes" caused a great deal of merriment. Mr. Chas. A. Asbury handled the banjo in an unusually skillful manner, receiving a triple encore. The earnestness displayed by Casey Ouley made her a favorite with the audience.

Considerable commotion ensued in the intermission, when Manager Morton took occasion to thank the audience for their presence and attention. He announced that the troupe would soon visit Bloomfield again, and with that a great many supposed that the entertainment was over, and immediately began to vacate their seats. When they were informed of their mistake they resumed their places amid wild applause. The entertainment concluded with a Southern plantation scene which was full of life, music and fun. The audience then dispersed, expressing themselves well satisfied with the evening's amusement.

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The Wonderful Antics of the Trained Birds Which Are the Rage on the Seine.

Two fixed bars on upright supports are placed on the table; a parrot climbs upon one of them, turns a somersault, keeps his head downward, and, passing on to the second bar, goes through the same exercise. Their owner then calls Tom, a small white parrot, who comes towards him as if about to climb on one of the bars, but runs back again, holding down his head and shaking his wings in a grotesque way. Tom is evidently the buffoon of the troupe. A bell is then brought with a handle which forms a lever; a parrot advances, and, putting one foot on the lever, rings the bell. The trainer asks the audience what number of rings they wish for; some one exclaims "Seven!" and the parrot rings the bell seven times.

The bird is then asked how much does three times three make, and it replies by ringing the bell nine times. A perch is then placed on the table in the form of a saw, at each end of which a gray parrot perches, and in the center, just above the pivot, jumps a magnificent white parrot named Charley, the principal one in the troupe. This parrot, throwing the weight of his body successively to right and left of the pivot, rocks the saws rapidly. To see the animation of this bird during the performance one would suppose that he took a real pleasure in rocking his companions.

The same bird then goes through another exercise. Four flagstaffs are set up on the table, and at the foot of each is a flag attached to a cord, which passes over a pulley at the top. The flags are English, French, Belgian and American. One of the audience asks for the French flag. Charley advances, draws himself up, erecting his bright yellow crest, and, spreading his wings, suddenly seizes the line with his beak, and then, alternately with beak and foot, hauls up the flag as a sailor would, hand over hand, until it is fast at the top. He then goes through the same performance with the other flags in succession.

Several letters of the alphabet are placed upright on the table, and Charley is again brought forward, plucking himself as before. A spectator calls for the letter "A." Charley hesitates, inclines his head on one side, appears to reflect, then suddenly advances and picks up the letter named, repeating the performance with other letters when called for. Suddenly little Tom jumps off the perch, runs up, seizes the remaining letters one after another, and pitches them away on the floor. Another parrot then appears, and at the word of command throws several somersaults on the table. Two others follow, and wait slowly round while the music plays.

Of all parrots M. Abdy considers the white cockatoos the most gifted.—Nature.

A Curious Nervous Disease.

There is a curious disease of the nervous system which is produced by continually using the fingers in the same way and for many hours at a time. It is called, according to the occupation of the sufferer, "writers' cramp," "fiddlers' cramp," "engravers' cramp," "telegraphers' cramp," "typewriters' cramp," and so on. The most remarkable feature about the disorder is that, though the subject of it cannot execute the movements necessary to his profession and which occasion the affection, he can do anything else with his fingers. Thus the bookkeeper affected with the "writers' cramp," though seized with a spasm of the fingers the moment he begins to write, and which prevents the slightest movement of his pen towards forming a letter, can use the same fingers in playing the violin, setting type, working the telegraph key, or, in fact, executing even the most complicated movement, without the slightest difficulty, provided, of course, that he possesses the requisite technical skill. The nerves are simply exhausted for the particular work which he has been carrying on for years. They have got into a rut, as it were, and cannot get out until rest and change of occupation have permitted them to accumulate the special kind of force needed for writing.—Dr. William A. Hammond.

Negro Children of New York.

The troops of negro children in Thirty-fourth and Forty-second streets every day make New York look like a southern city. The children are unattended, even the smallest of them toddling along contentedly without protection. The hoodlums no longer annoy them, and they are the most obedient and docile of children. What strikes the observer most forcibly about them is their remarkably prosperous condition. They are clad as negro children were never dressed before anywhere in the world. The boys wear neat knickerbockers and jackets, dark stockings and sturdy shoes, and very often their dusky hands are covered with well fitting gloves. Lunch-baskets are neat and tidy in appearance, and the looks freshly and tastefully covered. Many of the little girls are dressed with similar beauty and expensiveness. No man can look at their strong, bright faces without feeling that the race will take a great step in advance during this generation.—New York Sun.

Others Versus Disease Germ.

The aroma of red cedar is fatal to house moths; the aroma of black walnut leaves is fatal to fleas. It is a matter of common observation that persons engaged in the business of making shingles from odoriferous cypress timber in malarial districts are rarely, if ever, affected by malarial diseases, and that persons engaged in distilling turpentine do not suffer from either malarial diseases or consumption. It is said that when cholera was epidemic in Memphis, Tenn., persons working in livery stables were entirely exempt from it. It is affirmed that since the destruction of the clove trees on the Island of Ternate, the colony has suffered from epidemics unknown before; and in times when cholera has prevailed in London and Paris, those employed in the perfumery factories have escaped its ravages.—Boston Budget.

Boys Learning Needlework.

In the primary schools of Stockton, Cal., the boys in the two lower classes are obliged to learn needlework just the same as the little girls, so that hereafter they can make small repairs for themselves.

A Vegetable Soap.

In the valleys of California grows a tall, slender stemmed bilious plant, with purple and white flowers which played an important part in the economy of the Spanish population, and is still more or less used by the country people. It is the well known amole, or soap plant. It rises from a subterranean bulb, which is egg shaped in form, two or three inches in diameter, and enveloped in a thick coating of black, matted, hair like fibers. This bulb has the detergent properties of soap, cleaning the hands or clothing quite as well and much more pleasantly than coarser kinds of soap.—Popular Science Monthly.

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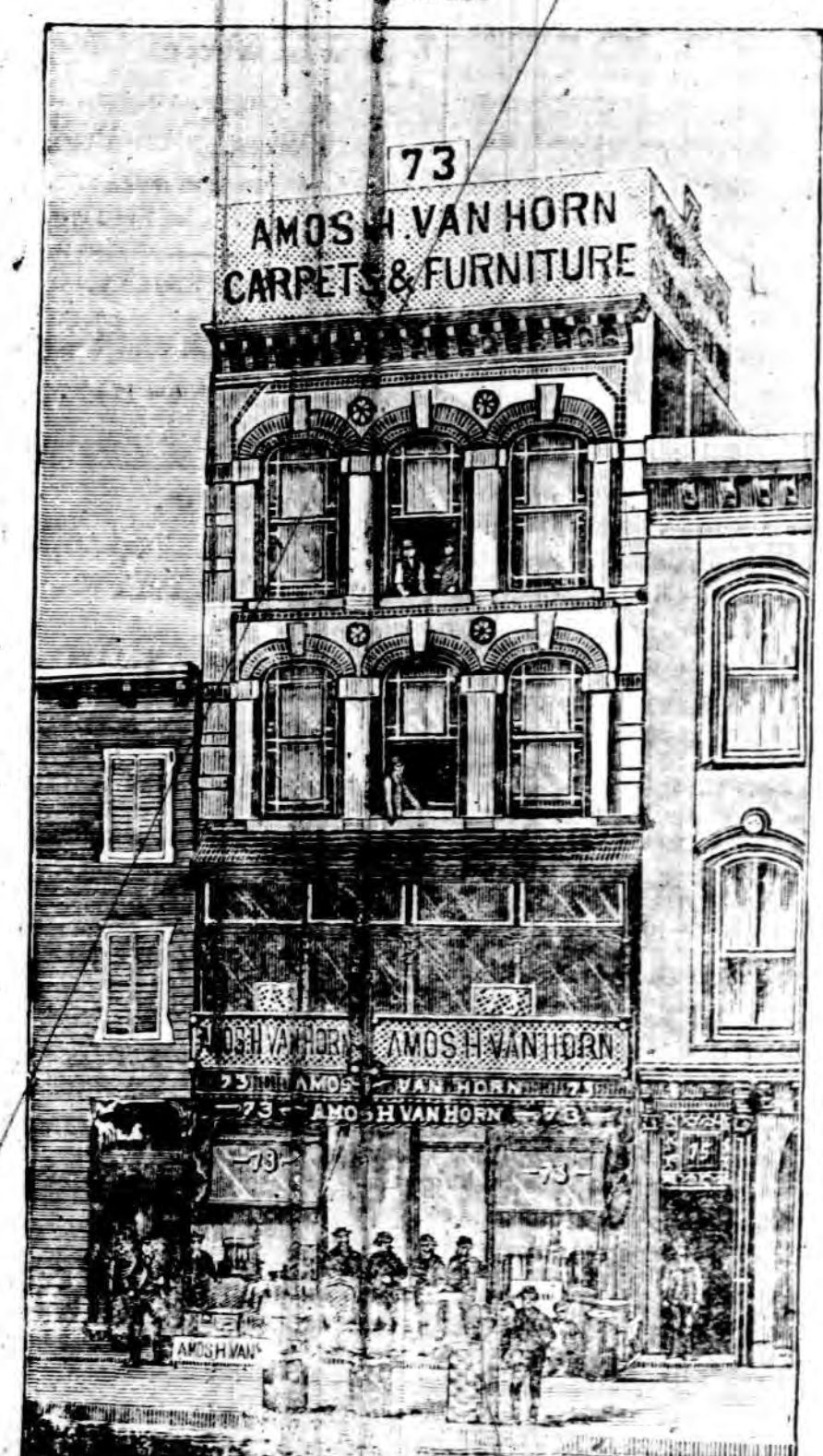
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